this one's for believing, if only for it's sake

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/19454908.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	Gen
Fandom:	The Umbrella Academy (TV)
Relationship:	Number Five | The Boy & Klaus Hargreeves
Characters:	Number Five | The Boy (Umbrella Academy), Klaus Hargreeves
Additional Tags:	Apocalypse, Post-Apocalypse, Ghost!Klaus, here's Five's POV, it was really hard guys, do you know how hard it is getting into teenage Five's head, My head hurts, and my heart, of course
Language:	English
Series:	Part 3 of Comes And Goes (In Waves)
Collections:	treesaps
Stats:	Published: 2019-07-03 Words: 4,014 Chapters: 1/1

this one's for believing, if only for it's sake

by hujwernoo

Summary

Five is a being of logic.

He always has been. One might think that, given his and his siblings' very existence is absolutely impossible (without even getting into their powers), he would not be as dedicated as he is to science and rationality. They would be wrong.

Notes

I figured Five needed a say in what he thinks of this whole mess. But guys, it is really hard to get into the mind of a character when they're forty-five years younger and minus several defining expriences like decades of isolation and becoming a contract killer, but also they've always been a genius. Do you know how hard that is to write? I deserve a medal.

See the end for some headcanons of mine.

See the end of the work for more notes

- Translation into Français available: TRAD - this one's for believing, if only for it's sake by Loclo4

Five is a being of logic.

He always has been. One might think that, given his and his siblings' very existence is absolutely impossible (without even getting into their powers), he would not be as dedicated as he is to science and rationality. They would be wrong.

Five is brilliant. He *knows* that he's brilliant. It's just a fact. So he is smart enough to realize that there must be an explanation for everything, a reason why things happen the way they do. He actually has no idea why he and his siblings spontaneously blinked into existence all at the same time, or why they have various physics-breaking superpowers, but he knows for certain that there is an explanation *somewhere.* It's just that figuring out *how* his powers work takes precedence over *why* he has them in the first place.

Which landed him straight into the apocalypse, but that's besides the point.

The *point* is, Five listens to facts. To logic. Anything that goes against what he expects just means he hasn't figured everything out - *yet.* He's always gathering more data, more information, more facts. And no matter how much he's tempted, he can't ignore any of those facts, because every single one is important.

Like the fact that he saw Klaus.

Klaus, who died in the apocalypse. Klaus, whose body he *buried.* Klaus, who warned him a split-second before he nearly got crushed by a stray piece of rubble, who was real, and audible, and *there,* and then gone.

Five knows that there is a very large chance that Klaus didn't actually appear. Five was on some moderately strong drugs at the time, and in a certain amount of pain, and has been alone for some time now, and *he* of all people knows that Klaus is *dead.*

Except.

There are also other facts to consider. Facts that make Five's breath come up short, either out of terror or hope, he can't be sure (they're one and the same at this point, really).

He tries to organize them in his mind, running over them again like a well-worn prayer.

One: Klaus can see the dead. It's his power. Five never had much interest in Klaus' power, because it isn't something quantifiable or tangible - hell, it doesn't even affect anyone other than Klaus. Five actually can't even remember the specifics, like if ghosts have a set appearance or if Klaus can control them or if they can interact at *all* with the physical world. Although it's likely that Klaus himself doesn't know all the answers to what he can do - Five is by far the most proactive about exploring his powers, but Klaus actively tries to dull them, limit them, avoid them. It's baffling and infuriating and just plain weird, and Five is *not* pleased that this has now resulted in a situation where he really needs to know absolutely everything about Klaus' powers but instead hardly knows more than a bare *description.*

Two: Since Klaus can see ghosts, then that means that there is an entirely new dimension to reality that scientists have no idea about. Putting it in these terms makes Five want to jump back in time just to *stab himself,* because *how did he not realize the implications of Klaus' powers?* If ghosts exist independently of Klaus, then *everything people know about reality is wrong.* Thermodynamics, space, light, gravity, time, and that's not even getting into *metaphysics* - Five nearly screamed when he realized that he would have to redo *all* of his equations, since apparently he misunderstands fundamental parts of reality. It would just figure that the key to *unlocking the secrets of the universe,* something he's been trying to figure out his entire life and now his life depends on, would rest with someone who slept just down the hall from him and yet he's always dismissed as useless.

Five reminds himself to breathe.

Three: Five has no idea what happened in the seventeen years between him leaving the breakfast table and landing in the rubble. Klaus' powers could have grown, or metamorphosed, or *anything.* A week after he left it could have been discovered that oh, no, actually Klaus' powers are manipulating souls or something, and Five would have completely missed it. This means that Five knows *even less than previously assumed* (he absolutely does *not* throw a tantrum at realizing this, anyone who says otherwise will be shot). For all he knows, Klaus could have zealously explored every single aspect of his powers and understand them better than Five understands his own.

Four: The incident with the wall *could* be a hallucination, but the evidence is against it. Five knows what kind of drugs he was on. Hallucinations are not a known side effect. Pain has never made him hallucinate before. He brought Delores home specifically to be a companion for himself, since he knows the dangers of extended isolation on the human mind, and so far she has buoyed him up considerably. There is no reason for all of that to fail right then, at that specific moment. For a danger he didn't even see coming - and he's still kicking himself over that one, it's become *basic nature* to check the stability of the surrounding area, and he failed and nearly got himself *killed* like an *idiot* - until he heard the shout.

Klaus' shout.

Five stares blankly at the chalkboard in front of him.

Everything boils down to one fact, and one fact only: out of all his siblings, everyone who died in the apocalypse, and all the people in *all of history,* the one single person who is even *theoretically* capable of contacting Five after death is Klaus.

It's *possible.*

Five erases a string of numbers from the board. It's been four (hah) days since The Incident. He's been trying to figure out the mechanics of ghost physics, but without anything to study it's pretty slow going. There's just too little data, and while Five is brilliant he's not literally magic. Which might be a disadvantage here, because if he absolutely *had* to name the sibling with powers most resembling 'magic', it would be Klaus.

Five hisses under his breath, and looks around again, scanning the horizon. Nothing. There's always nothing.

He sets down the chalk and studies the equations. It's no use - too little, too vague, too many unknown unknowns. Five grits his teeth and digs up the memory of his brother's voice - *"Five?"* - before breathing out again.

He almost didn't recognize his own name. It's the only other voice he's heard in six months, and if Klaus wasn't visible he wouldn't have recognized it as his brother.

Five takes another breath.

He's going at this the wrong way.

Five checks his leg. The pain is lesser now than it was just a few days ago. Five doesn't know why it lingered like that, and it scares him more than he will *ever* admit, but it's progressing normally now. The splint gets unwrapped twice a day, and Five does so now. Inspecting the wound, he notes with satisfaction that there's still no signs of infection. He's ransacked every pharmacy and hospital in a ten-mile radius over the last several months, and now has roughly two entire rooms of antibiotics stored away in the library basement, but this is his first major injury without Grace around. He never realized before how much he relied on her for medical assistance, and that irks him.

When he cautiously stands, there's a sense of discomfort, but it's nowhere near what it was last week, and it certainly can't compare to Reginald's training, so he refuses to categorize it as pain. He should still use a walking stick, he grudgingly admits to himself, because gaining a permanent limp in the apocalypse just because of his pride would be stupid.

It's a bit awkward, because he fractured his left wrist in The Incident and it's his left leg that's broken, but he manages to jam his walking stick (replaced after the first one got crushed by a stone slab) under his armpit and hobble towards the wagon at an agonizingly slow pace.

….It's possible Five is not *entirely* enthusiastic about the thought that Klaus has been invisibly witnessing his every move since he arrived in the apocalypse. He resolves that if Klaus brings up certain moments that *absolutely never happened,* he will find a way to punch out a ghost.

Five reaches the wagon and stops, feeling a little dizzy. The sardines ran out yesterday, and even aside from everything else he needs to find more food.

He looks over at Delores, perched on top of a stack of books. "I'm going out," he tells her. "I need to get food, and to - clear my head."

He imagines her smiling wryly, knowing his plan. *'Good luck,'* he almost hears her say, and he smiles back at her. He wonders what Klaus is saying, if he's saying anything, if he's even here. Five knows he's selfish for hoping he is, hoping there's someone else in this hell, but then he's always been a bit of a bastard.

"I'll be back in a few hours," he says, intentionally echoing his words from the day of The Incident. He gets into the wagon, pulls the handle towards himself, and pushes the stick

against the ground to move forward. He waves goodbye to Delores, heart in his throat, and goes forward.

****

He is not back in a few hours.

In his defense, this isn't the first time he's broken that promise. Delores is understanding about it - there's no controlling how much he finds when he scavenges. He's picked over everything nearby, and unfortunately he hasn't run across the stash of one of those hardcore survivalists who build bunkers full of nonperishable food.

Instead, he has to look among homes and stores. Supermarkets *stink,* with tons and tons of food rotting away. It's different from the rotting of bodies - that's become so pervasive he hardly notices anymore. When he goes to supermarkets and sees all that food going to waste, when he has to crawl over mountains of moldy bread and slimy vegetables hoping to find a can or two that hasn't been smashed….

Five shakes himself out of his recollections. Now isn't the time. If he has a say in it, it will never be the time. He's going to figure out the equations, jump back, protect his siblings, save the world, and never have to look at another can of sardines again. He's going to fix it. All of it.

Currently, he's at a small department store that has a miniscule grocery section. He came here before six weeks ago, and noticed that there was a back room with all of its walls miraculously still standing. Originally, he planned to come back to it when his jumps were working properly again (he can't figure out why they're so erratic, and won't risk trying anything important when his powers are throwing a hissy fit) and check it out.

Instead, he's trying to break down the door, because he's fairly certain that it's the supply room. There's nothing edible left on the shelves, but there's a good chance he can find something in the room.

That is, if he can even *get inside.* Five grits his teeth and glares at the door. It's heavy, solid metal, and won't budge an inch. He can't tell what kind of lock it has, but a single lock should *not* be this sturdy. He suspects there's something on the other side blocking it, if only because that would really save his ego right now.

It probably doesn't help that two of his limbs are largely useless right now. He glares at his wrist splint, his leg splint, and then the door again. The urge to curse them out is overwhelming, but ever since The Incident Five has been trying to reign in some of his *tendencies.* The thought of Klaus seeing him throw a tantrum like a small toddler is not an appealing one. He just knows Klaus would laugh until he cried, the jackass.

Five then loses the next several minutes wondering if ghosts *can* cry, and if so, under what circumstances, and for what reasons, and if that ability extends to other bodily functions like blood or sweat. He'll have to test *so many things,* it's absurd.

But that's later, and this is now. And now he has to get through the door. Five itches to shoot at it, but a ricochet hitting his other leg is the last thing he needs right now.

Five eyes the horizon. He's already cutting it close, and his return to base will probably be after dark has fallen. He grimaces. It's no use. He needs food, and to get to it he needs to jump.

Five closes his eyes and breathes slowly, centering himself. He hasn't needed an extended meditation routine to activate his powers in nearly a *decade,* but apparently the apocalypse has fucked up *everything.*

He breathes again, deeply, and since his eyes are closed he feels his hands glow instead of sees them, and he *jumps* -

- and immediately chokes on the putrid air that slaps across his face. He opens his eyes, gagging, and the few shafts of light that have trickled in through the holes in the ceiling illuminate the room enough for him to see what's inside.

It's a body, of course. Five knows this smell very well. Six months of decay have not done it any favors, and he can't tell if it used to be male or female. It's dressed in some kind of uniform, and he guesses it used to be an employee of the store. Five clamps down on the bile rising in his throat, and spends the next several minutes acclimating to the smell.

Five has no idea what killed everyone. Of all the bodies he's come across, many had injuries that were obviously the cause of death. They were crushed by buildings, or burned by fires, or bled out from shrapnel. But a little less than half of people had nothing like that (Five doesn't think about his siblings, how they looked just lying there, like they could wake up if he just shook them hard enough). Five's first hypothesis was a fast-acting, fast-spreading pathogen of some kind, but he's been here six months and hasn't contracted anything like that - if it was a pathogen it would need to be *extremely* virulent to infect that number of people.

Five has entertained other hypotheses, but none of them seem right, and the evidence is all over the place. The one and *only* concrete clue he has is the prosthetic eye Luther was holding. If he could just figure out what the *fuck* was going on at the Academy -

And then Five nearly falls over, because he has been missing the most obvious thing all along.

He's been so focused on the strangeness of Klaus' appearance, what it might mean, how it could have happened, and the possibility that *he might not be alone* and *one of his siblings is still here* that he forgot the most blindingly, utterly obvious thing in the world.

Klaus knows how the world ends.

It makes sense. He was with Luther and Diego and Allison (Five refuses to get sidetracked by wondering about Vanya and Ben, because he gave up that hope when he realized the totality of the death toll, he *did*) when they died. He was at the epicenter of the entire apocalypse. He saw *everything,* likely witnessed Luther clawing out the eye, was probably personally murdered by the person it belongs to.

Five feels disconnected, separate from his own body. It's only partially due to the smell. The rest is him *reeling* from the implications that he's been *missing this entire time.* What the fuck is *wrong* with him?

He needs - he needs to figure this out right now. He needs to know if Klaus was real or not, because if he was then all that separates Five from every answer he's been searching for is a small trick of reality, and Five has been breaking reality since he was born.

He whirls around and - yes, good, he was right, there's food on the shelves, enough to last for a week, maybe two if he's careful. He opens the first thing he can find and pours the condensed soup down his throat. He can't jump while carrying anything substantial, one of his most frustrating limits, so he needs to break down the door from the inside. He almost screams when he realizes that this will be no easier than breaking the door from the outside.

Unless….

Five wishes he could say that he treats the body with respect as he frisks it, but he is in a hurry and bodies are just bodies. He stopped caring about them a long time ago, long before he came to the apocalypse - a consequence of Reginald training them to be soldiers instead of children. The only bodies he's ever treated gently are the ones buried in four shallow graves next to the ruins of the Academy.

It seems he's in luck. Five finds the key ring in the corpse's pocket, and the third one unlocks the door. He opens it with a feeling of triumph.

The next twenty minutes is eaten up by loading everything onto the wagon. Five has to guess about a few things that don't have expiration dates, but he's fairly certain that he's stripped everything edible from the shelves. He'll have to come back for the non-edible things later - he's dreading the day he runs out of toilet paper, but at least this stretches the supply that much farther.

The wagon ends up so full that he can't fit inside it, so Five resigns himself to walking back to the base. He pulls the wagon with his good hand, and with the walking stick under his armpit it's….well, it's progress. He definitely won't make it back until midnight at the earliest, and he hopes Delores won't be too mad at him.

****

Along the way back to base is a park. It's strewn with bodies and wreckage, but Five can tell that once upon a time, it was well tended to and likely even beautiful. There's a few benches that aren't too warped, and he sits down on one. An hour of pulling the wagon, moving in unnatural ways due to his injuries, has put a strain on him, and even he can admit that he needs a break.

Five tips back his head, and observes his surroundings through narrowed eyes.

There's still not a flicker of Klaus, which is disappointing but expected by now. Despite Five's earlier musings, the chance that Klaus has achieved mastery over his powers is slim at best. If he had to guess, he would expect that Klaus slipped further into drugs over the past

seventeen years, and that would not lend itself to helping him better understand what he can do. If Klaus is a ghost, and can manifest himself, he would have done so earlier if he had any control over it. That's just a fact. Klaus may be an idiot with his head screwed on sideways, but he wouldn't leave Five alone in the apocalypse if he had any say in the matter. The expression on his face when he manifested - it was completely unexpected to him. Five wonders if he tried manifesting before, tried talking and interacting with Five, and gave it up as futile.

The instigating factor, then, was the danger to Five. Based on where Klaus appeared, he would have been able to see the slab. He must have noticed how precarious its position was, and panicked at the thought that it would fall. Five….was not in the best mindset at the time, and may have….*contributed* to the idea that it would fall at that exact moment. Considering how fast the slab came down compared to how panicked Klaus had been, Klaus must have been trying to warn him for some time.

Five breathes out, and gets to his feet. Leaving the wagon behind, he gingerly hobbles towards a ruined building near the edge of the park.

Five can admit when an approach isn't working. Otherwise, no progress can be made. Trying to figure out the math of Klaus' appearance and possible reality is doomed to failure when he has so little data. It's Klaus' powers he's looking at here, not his own, and he isn't going to be able to will them into working the way he wants.

He might, however, be able to manipulate *Klaus* into willing them to work. After all, he did it once before, entirely on accident.

Five passes an eye over the building, careful not to let his gaze catch on anything in particular. There are several cracks in the walls, and chunks of rubble that could easily fall down, but he needs something more subtle. Something that's plausible for him to miss, but that Klaus sees as an immediate and enormous danger.

Then he sees it. Just out of the corner of his eye, but as he gets closer he has to keep himself from smiling. One wall is cracked and bulged outwards, the top half leaning backwards at an angle. Anyone looking at it from the outside would expect it to fall down from a light breeze, considering it's more cracks than wall. But as Five passes it and glances over, it merely looks slightly dented from *this* side. Perfect. He's fairly sure it didn't look like he saw the other side, so he comes to a halt and sighs.

Five purses his lips and looks at the horizon, bathed in the fading light of sunset. He lets irritation cross his face, because he *is* irritated, and hits a few bits of rubble with his cane. He nearly overbalances, and starts cursing as his leg makes its displeasure known.

Five gets louder in his cursing, and glares at the wreckage surrounding him. He thacks a few pieces with his cane, and one of the hits lands on the wall.

He pretends not to notice the slight shifting his hit provokes. He gets louder, and tries kicking a few things instead of the wall, because if he's wrong about (everything) this then he doesn't actually want to cripple himself. But Klaus doesn't appear, and Five keeps cursing and hitting, and Five -

Five gets angry.

It's not fair. It's not fair and he knows, he *knows* that nothing in life is fair, knows that he will never, ever get a fair deal, known it his whole life since he realized that Reginald isn't a good person and doesn't care about what's *fair* in the least. But in all of his wildest imaginings, he never thought that the world could be *this* unfair, that there were depths he could never even conceive of. He never thought he would have to scrape and scramble for food, learn to kludge together enough medical knowledge to keep himself alive, spend every waking moment working out physics that would make experts sweat, invent a companion just to keep himself sane, *look into his family's dead staring eyes -*

Five *screams,* and his fist hits the wall, and there's a noise like an avalanche and the wall *shudders* and no no fuck no he's scrambling back but *fuck he's not fast enough -*

- and he's *yanked* backwards, an arm around his waist, crashing to the ground, and the wall collapses and hits the ground very much like the slab, and it definitely would have crushed him but that doesn't matter, it doesn't *matter.*

Because Klaus is clutching him, tight enough to bruise, tight enough to break, hard enough that Five couldn't breathe even if he tried. Klaus is here. He's *here.*

"Klaus," Five rasps, and can say nothing else. Nothing else matters.

"Five," his brother breathes. "You *fucking idiot."*

And for the first time in six months, Five starts laughing.

End Notes

That was so cathartic to write, I hope it was just as cathartic to read.

As to my headcanons:

It is a personally amusing headcanon of mine that the reason Five took decades to get back is because it took him so long to realize ‘wait, everything physics says is wrong, and the proof is my brother who can talk to ghosts’. Can you imagine the look on his face?

(yes, that means he'll progress faster here, but don't forget the Commission. I'm almost positive they only swooped in when he was getting close to a breakthrough, in order to distract him as long as possible)

It is also my headcanon that Vanya didn’t blow up the moon the first time around. I think Five would have noticed *that,* and despite the death toll there would have been *some* survivors. Instead, I think she released some sort of sonic wave that killed everything with a brain. Five doesn’t include hunting animals when listing his food sources, the Hargreeves’ bodies didn’t seem to have any obviously fatal injuries, and it’s the only explanation I can come up with for wine bottles and paperbacks surviving but not a single human being. Obviously Vanya shook apart the whole city (country?) as well, but the brain-kill wave is my take on why *nobody* survived.

Works inspired by this one

[PODFIC] This one's for believing, if only for it's sake by where_thewind_blows

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!